

REMARKS

Reconsideration of the application in light of the remarks which follow, is respectfully requested. In addition, consideration of the First, Second and Third Preliminary Amendments filed on September 29, 2003, February 19, 2004 and August 4, 2004, is also respectfully requested.

At the outset, Applicants thank Examiner Chowdhury of the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office for his time and consideration in discussing the present application with Applicants' representative.

In a telephone conference with the Examiner on August 3, 2004, Applicants' representative noted that the Official Action mailed July 14, 2004, did not appear to take into consideration the First Preliminary Amendment filed September 29, 2003. The Examiner advised that such Preliminary Amendment was inadvertently overlooked by the Patent Office, and that the Official Action mailed July 14, 2004, would be rescinded and a new Official Action would be issued.

In a further telephone conference with the Examiner on October 4, 2004, the Examiner advised that filing a written reply would be the most expedient way to compel consideration of the First Preliminary Amendment filed September 29, 2003, and issuance of a new, non-final Official Action. In accordance with the Examiner's suggestion, by the filing of this paper, Applicants respectfully request issuance of a new, non-final Official Action wherein the Examiner has considered the previously filed Preliminary Amendments.

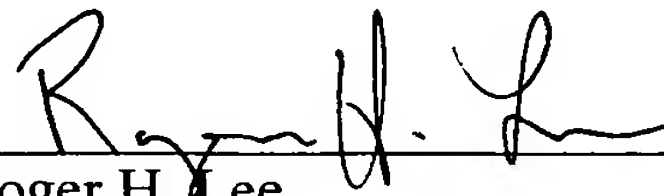
Applicants further note that the outstanding Official Action sets forth rejections of canceled claims 1-20. In light of the canceled status of such claims, withdrawal of the rejections is respectfully requested.

If there are any questions concerning this paper or the application in general, the Examiner is invited to telephone the undersigned.

Respectfully submitted,

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